

How to file a FOIA request for NASA Agency records

A FOIA request for NASA Agency records must include the requester's name and mailing address, a description of the record(s) being sought, and the requester must address fees or provide justification for a fee waiver as well as address the fee category. It is also helpful to provide a telephone number and email address in case the FOIA office has any questions regarding the request; however this information is optional when submitting a written request. If a request is submitted online via the NASA FOIA website, the required information must be completed. Do not include a social security number on any correspondence with the FOIA office.

NASA does not have a central location for submitting FOIA requests and it does not maintain a central index or database of records in its possession. Instead, Agency records are decentralized and maintained by various Centers and Offices throughout the country. In accordance with the Agency Records Management procedures NASA has not yet implemented a records management application for automated capture and control of e-records; therefore, official files are primarily paper files.

A member of the public may request an Agency record by *mail, facsimile (FAX), electronic-mail (e-mail)*, or by submitting a written request in person to one of the thirteen (13) [NASA FOIA Requester Service Center offices](#), preferably the FOIA office having responsibility over the record requested or to the NASA Headquarters (HQ) FOIA Office. When a requester is unable to determine the proper NASA FOIA Office to direct a request to, the requester may send the request to the NASA HQ FOIA Office, 300 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20546-0001. The HQ FOIA Office will forward the request to the Center(s) that it determines to be most likely to maintain the records that are sought. It is in the interest of the requester to send the request to the office they believe has responsibility over the records being sought. A misdirected request may take up to 10 additional working days to re-route to the proper FOIA office.

A requester who is making a request for records about himself or herself (a Privacy Act request) must comply with the verification of identity provisions set forth in 14 CFR § 1212.202. Where a request pertains to a third party, a requester may receive greater access by submitting either a notarized authorization signed by the individual who is the subject of the request, or a declaration by that individual made in compliance with the requirements set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 1746, authorizing disclosure of the records to the requester, or submit proof that the individual is deceased (*e.g.*, a copy of a death certificate or a verifiable obituary).

As an exercise of its administrative discretion, each Center FOIA may require a requester to supply additional information if necessary, *i.e.*, a notarized statement from the subject of the file, in order to verify that a particular individual has consented to a third party disclosure. Information will only be released on a case-by-case to third party requesters if they have independently provided authorization from the individual who is the subject of the request.

Describing Records Sought

In view of the time limits under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6) for an initial determination on a request for an Agency record, a request must be addressed to an appropriate FOIA office and be clearly identified in the letter as a request for an Agency record under the "Freedom of Information Act." Additionally, requesters must describe the records sought in sufficient detail to enable Agency personnel who are familiar with the subject area of the request to identify and locate the record with a reasonable amount of effort. To the extent possible, requesters should include specific information that may assist a FOIA office in identifying the requested records, such as the date, title or name, author, recipient, subject matter of the record, case number, file designation, or reference number. In general, requesters should include as much detail as possible about the specific records or the types of records sought.

If the requester fails to reasonably describe the records sought, the FOIA office shall inform the requester of what additional information is needed or why the request is deficient. The FOIA office will also notify the requester that it will not be able to comply with the FOIA request unless the additional information requested is provided within 20 working days from the date of the letter. If the additional information is not provided within that timeframe, the request will be closed without further notification.

When requesters fail to provide sufficient details after being asked to clarify a request, the FOIA office will notify the requester that the request has not been properly made and the request will be closed without further notification. NASA need not comply with a blanket or categorical request (such as “all matters relating to” a general subject) where it is not reasonably feasible to determine what record is sought. NASA will in good faith attempt to identify and locate the record(s) sought and will consult with the requester when necessary and appropriate for that purpose in accordance with our regulations. NASA is not required to create or compile records in response to a FOIA request.